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MAKING MEN INTO DADS
Fatherhood, the State, and Welfare Reform

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Recent revisions in child support and paternity establishment legislation enacted under the 1996 welfare reform act, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), significantly alter the American welfare state's relationship to men's fathering. Through a critical review of prior research and social service literature, the authors argue that PRWORA actively constructs fatherhood not only through state policies that maintain males as "breadwinners" but also through state-sponsored social service programs that seek to influence men's identities as fathers. PRWORA's policies and their accompanying discourses simultaneously reproduce and undermine gender hierarchy yet tacitly maintain structural race and class inequalities.

This article discusses recent revisions in child support and paternity establishment legislation enacted under the 1996 welfare reform effort, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). It critically reviews recent studies on child support collection and literature from social service programs that focus on fathers whose children receive welfare. In doing so, it illuminates the ways in which the contemporary U.S. welfare state defines men's fathering. Many scholars of the U.S. welfare state have described the state's role in the (re)production of women's mothering (Abramovitz 1988; Gordon 1990; Jenson 1990; Solinger 1992). Although there is substantial investigation into state support of male wage labor, less thought has been given to the state's construction of men's fathering.

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We argue that PRWORA actively constructs male fatherhood not only through state policies that maintain male "breadwinning" but also through state-supported social service programs that seek to shape men's identities as fathers. The discussion builds on feminist state theory and recent work in masculinity studies to elucidate the ways in which PRWORA's policies articulate a complex notion of fatherhood. We contend that PRWORA's interventions into men's fathering hold paradoxical implications for equitable gender relations. Recognizing that gender relations cannot be examined outside of the nexus of race and class relations in which they occur, we also illustrate how PRWORA's fathering policies use feminist and gender claims to advance dominant race and class interests. Finally, we suggest that although programmatic interventions may be individually empowering for men marginalized along the axes of race and class, they do little to challenge larger structural power relations.

METHOD

The authors extracted data for this study from two sets of source material. The first set consists of research examining state-mediated child support efforts for families receiving welfare. A database search of more than 17,000 public, academic, and other libraries located these materials. After an initial review of the literature's bibliographies, additional references were added. Although this body of literature may not be completely exhaustive, it does contain many commonly cited studies in this area. This literature includes both qualitative and quantitative studies that address questions of economic feasibility, payment barriers, and socioeconomic outcomes. Each of the individual studies is subject to common limitations including small sample sizes, self-report biases, and limited generalizability due to the geographic concentration of samples.

The second set of data consists of literature describing contemporary social service programs that promote "responsible fatherhood." Data collection occurred through two methods. Again, the authors gathered works through a database search of more than 17,000 public, academic, and other libraries. As relatively few materials were located, the authors conducted an additional search on the World Wide Web. This body of literature is generally descriptive in nature and outlines various programs' services, philosophies, and goals. These data also include some initial program evaluation literature.

The method employed in this study can be best described as a meta-analysis. The review of existing sources allows for a broad-based examination of state intervention at an economic level and at the level of program service. Obviously, reliance on secondary data sources entails limitations in measurement construction and raises validity issues. Nevertheless, using this methodology, we are able to provide a critical literature review, to tease apart latent theoretical issues, and to develop a framework for future research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: FATHERHOOD AND THE STATE

Contemporary feminist theorists understand the welfare state as profoundly gendered. They conceptualize a "two-tiered" system in which women are granted low-level, means-tested benefits on the basis of their subordinate position as mothers, while men receive universal and more generous benefits related to their more privileged position as wage workers (Abramovitz 1996; Gordon 1990; Jenson 1990; Piven 1990). According to these theorists, the welfare state upholds a sexual division of labor by acting as a substitute wage-earning husband for single mothers and by rewarding men's wage earning. However, welfare programs often have contradictory effects and frequently undermine gender hierarchy. This paradox is partially attributable to the welfare state's intervention into the historical pattern of autonomous and "private" patriarchal familial relations (Abramovitz 1988; Gordon 1990; Piven 1990). It is also because the welfare state serves as a site of conflict where the political claims of various constituencies are contested (Fraser 1990; Fraser and Gordon 1995; Gordon 1990). Despite the acknowledgment of the multiple possibilities that the state extends to women, this body of work does not examine the variety of positions men may hold vis-à-vis the welfare state. In this framework, men's fathering is generally not explicitly theorized as an autonomous category and is subsumed under male wage earning—if not implicitly equated with it. For instance, Josephson's (1997) and Mink's (1998) in-depth discussions of U.S. child support policy understand the state to be primarily concerned with extracting male fiscal capital.

Recent work in masculinity studies engages with feminist thought while considering the discrete categories of masculinity and fatherhood. Robert Connell (1995) argues that the welfare state does not solely work to enhance male wage earning. Rather, for men marginalized along the lines of class, race, and sexuality, the state frequently acts as a source of "alien power" and violence. State policies embody and reproduce a "hegemonic masculinity" that legitimatizes the contemporary form of patriarchy. "Protest masculinities" emerge in dialectical relation to hegemonic masculinity and the state. Similarly, Robert Griswald (1993, 7) argues that "state intervention has had complicated and contradictory effects on the powers of fathers." For instance, the state can uphold paternal power through programs such as unemployment insurance. At the same time, it can circumscribe the autonomy of individual fathers under the auspices of child welfare. Moreover, Griswald (1993) contends that the modern state's usurpation of traditional paternal functions such as family support and education freed men to develop more affective ties to women and children. Yet, the accompanying discourse of a "new fatherhood" maintained preindustrial patriarchal privilege and rarely led to substantive changes in gender hierarchies. Frank Furstenberg's (1988) conceptualization of a "good dad/bad dad" dialectic describes the paradoxical aspects of contemporary fatherhood. On one hand, evidence points to the circulation of new fathering discourses and a related

increase in paternal involvement. On the other hand, the number of female-headed households has risen steadily throughout the twentieth century.

Taken together, feminist and masculinity theorists describe a multilayered and contested welfare state. Employing feminist state theory, this article will argue that PRWORA's fathering policies have paradoxical implications for equitable gender relations. It will simultaneously challenge feminist paradigms by demonstrating that the state's articulation of male wage earning does not necessarily privilege men whose children receive welfare. Rather, as masculinity theorists contend, state intervention into men's fathering serves as a source of alien power for these men and does not successfully subvert the race and class hierarchies to which they are subject. Finally, although the state's construction of fatherhood definitely implicates male wage labor and fiscal capital, it raises other issues as well. The state not only frees men to establish affective ties to children but proactively creates these bonds in circulating a particular fathering discourse among low-income men and men of color.

PRWORA AND FATHERS: CONTESTED ECONOMIES

The opening text of the 1996 PRWORA reads:

> The congress makes the following findings (1) Marriage is the foundation of a successful society (2) Marriage is an essential institution of a successful society which promotes the interests of children. . . . Promotion of *responsible fatherhood* and motherhood is integral to successful child rearing and the well-being of children. (P. 1, italics added)

Here, the state declares fathering as law. How did this latter twentieth-century articulation emerge and what are its implications?

History of State Intervention

In 1975, the U.S. Congress passed Title IV-D of the Social Security Act that founded the federal Child Support Enforcement Program. This program was charged with establishing paternity, locating nonresidential parents, and collecting child support for children receiving funds under the federal entitlement program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). It eventually came to serve custodial mothers whose children did not receive welfare, although these families were not required to participate in IV-D services (Brown 1995). Title IV-D posited the establishment of legal paternity as a prerequisite to the pursuance of a formal child support order in cases of nonmarital births. The act imposed a federal mandate that single mothers receiving AFDC cooperate with Child Support Enforcement regulations in locating and identifying fathers. It also required mothers to sign over their

child support rights to the state, meaning that the state held all collected child support monies in order to recover AFDC expenditures (Wattenberg 1987).

In the Reagan/Bush era, a series of measures sought to improve child support collection systems (Little Hoover Commission 1997; Sonenstein, Halcomb, and Seefeldt 1993). The 1984 Child Support Enforcement amendments allowed states to directly grant mothers fifty dollars (termed a *pass-through*) in hopes of increasing maternal compliance with paternity adjudication (Wattenberg 1987). The amendments also required states to establish stricter enforcement procedures, such as expedited mandated income withholding and tax refund intercepts for fathers with delinquent payments (Little Hoover Commission 1997). The 1988 Family Support Act (FSA) instituted income withholding in all cases, mandated improvements in collection rates, introduced a variety of performance standards for paternity establishment, and implemented statewide automated case tracking (Edin 1995; Garfinkel, Meyer, and Sandefur 1992; Little Hoover Commission 1997). Comprehensive revisions in child support and paternity establishment policies are again occurring under contemporary welfare reform.

The PRWORA of 1996 abolished the federally guaranteed AFDC program for single mothers and replaced it with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). TANF denotes the most significant shift in federal welfare policy since the enactment of the 1935 Social Security Act, as it severs the federal guarantee of cash assistance for poor women and children. States now receive federal block grants to fund their welfare programs. When these monies run out, neither the states nor the federal government are obligated to provide economic relief. TANF also imposes both time limits and work requirements. After two years of receiving assistance, adult recipients must either work, participate in job training, or risk losing their benefits. After a total of 60 months, not necessarily consecutive, all recipients become ineligible for additional aid. However, states may apply for an exemption/waiver for up to 20 percent of their TANF caseloads if they so desire. In conjunction with TANF, PRWORA retains requirements that states operate Title IV-D standard child support enforcement programs.

PRWORA's child support and paternity establishment provisions regulate the behavior of both women and men. PRWORA intricately links a mother's eligibility for public aid to her compliance with paternity establishment measures. Whereas AFDC regulations required mothers to cooperate with paternity establishment procedures after being determined eligible for aid, TANF requires that mothers prove cooperation *before* qualifying for benefits. States must reduce individual TANF grants a minimum of 25 percent for noncooperation with paternal identification efforts (Little Hoover Commission 1997). In addition, two-thirds of the states have eliminated the $50 pass-through to custodial families that provided an incentive for compliance. Upon leaving the welfare caseloads, families obtain the full amount of newly collected support (Bernard 1998).

In an attempt to increase payment rates, PRWORA allows for greater enforcement authority over paternal support collections through expanded income tax withholding for delinquent obligators or noncustodial parents owing child support.

It also revokes state licenses, denies food stamps, requires credit bureaus to provide reports to IV-D agencies, and seizes payment from a variety of sources (Turetsky 1996). Under PRWORA, male wage labor is a central category for state intervention. States now have the authority to impose work requirements on delinquent obligators. Thus, although proponents of contemporary welfare reform vilify "big government," PRWORA's child support measures actually allow for a greater government presence in the lives of poor people and people of color who are significantly overrepresented on the TANF caseloads.[1] Ironically, with the stated goal of reducing public costs and governmental domain, child support and paternity establishment legislation extend state intervention into what had hitherto been defined as "private" life. In addition, PRWORA redefines the role of child support collection from a recoupment of welfare expenditures to a primary means of economic support for families who receive time-limited public assistance (Little Hoover Commission 1997).[2]

PRWORA and the Male Wage

PRWORA articulates male breadwinning as a central component of fatherhood and holds the means to punitively enforce it. PRWORA's fathering policies challenge feminist depictions of the American welfare state as unilaterally shoring up paternal earnings through generous benefits. Rather, as in Connell's framework, the new welfare state frequently acts as a source of alien power for low-income men and men of color. In a particularly explicit example of the state's adversarial stance toward some men, the California Supreme Court recently ruled (1998) that delinquent obligators can be jailed for failing to obtain employment. In the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dolan (1998, B3) quoted the supervising deputy district attorney as stating, "We're ecstatic. . . . This will force those individuals who absolutely refuse to do anything to work." The court also determined that legally requiring a noncustodial parent to work does not violate a constitutional ban on "involuntary servitude."

PRWORA's punitive logic also seems to substantially overestimate the earning capacity of men whose children receive welfare benefits. The majority of empirical evidence suggests that never-married fathers and fathers whose children receive public assistance have, on average, very low incomes and high unemployment rates (Bloom and Sherwood 1994; Finkel and Roberts 1994; Josephson 1997; Lerman and Ooms 1993; McDonald, Moran, and Garfinkel 1990; Nichols-Casebolt and Klawitter 1990). In addition, there is a significant correlation between low income and/or unemployment and nonpayment of child support (Bartfeld and Meyer 1994; Danziger and Nichols-Casebolt 1990; Dubey 1995). This would suggest that upper- and middle-income men are more likely to comply with child support orders and are thus less likely to be subject to punitive state action. Middle- and upper-income men also have greater access to legal representation, can establish child support awards through the court system, and thereby avoid state bureaucracy. Conversely, low-income men have little choice but to interact with an adversarial state.

Other empirical evidence also supports Connell's notion of the state as alien power. Qualitative research documents that under AFDC regulations, fathers reneged on child support payments when the monies were used to "pay back" the state. Fathers felt that state-mediated support was of no visible benefit to their child(ren) and preferred "under-the-table" payments that their child(ren) received directly (Ash 1997; Bloom and Sherwood 1994; Edin 1995; Little Hoover Commission 1997). Furthermore, a significant percentage of mothers on AFDC received regular financial or in-kind support from their children's fathers, but only a small percentage of mothers collected support through official channels (Ash 1997; Edin 1995; Edin and Lein 1997). It was not uncommon for fathers to live with mothers and their children on AFDC, although this information was hidden from the welfare authorities (Ash 1997; Edin 1995). This research confirms other findings that suggest a significant level of never-married and nonresidential paternal involvement (Lerman and Ooms 1993; Mott 1990; Perloff and Buckner 1996). Thus men are sometimes active fathers, although they avoid antagonistic state oversight.

Although most components of PRWORA adopt an adversarial logic, at times the policy attempts to provide supportive interventions. However, these efforts prove ineffectual. Under PRWORA, states and counties have begun to pilot father-focused job training programs. These programs partially acknowledge the relationship between payments and income from employment. They advance a rhetoric of rehabilitation rather than punishment. For example, the multisite "Parent's Fair Share" program provides job training to unemployed men and allows for temporary suspension and/or reduction in support payments while fathers participate (Bloom and Sherwood 1994; Doolittle et al. 1998). However, an extensive evaluation found that no site produced statistically significant increases in employment or earnings (Doolittle et al. 1998).

Gender and the Economy of Fathering

These state-mediated child support and paternity establishment policies present paradoxical implications for gender hierarchy. Mothers indeed gain certain advantages from these interventions. In her qualitative study of women receiving AFDC, Edin (1995) found that the official child support system served as a "negotiation tool" for mothers. When fathers reneged on their informal agreements or failed to provide any support, women used the state as a source of protection and threatened to turn fathers over to the authorities. Likewise, empirical studies show that Title IV-D child support monies can provide limited economic assistance to mothers and children (Danziger and Nichols-Casebolt 1990). This is especially true when stringent enforcement techniques, such as wage withholding and immediate income assignment, are applied (Bartfeld and Meyer 1994; Danziger and Nichols-Casebolt 1990; Nichols-Casebolt and Klawitter 1990). In her survey of mothers serviced by IV-D programs, Josephson (1997, 108) concluded that "for the most part the parents . . . did not want the state to leave them alone." In addition, empirical evidence suggests that the income of both divorced and never-married fathers increases over

time. Therefore, establishing a support order may prove of eventual benefit (Finkel and Roberts 1994). In the current context of retrenching state support, these monies may offer some degree of economic relief for women and children.

Despite their promise of male responsibility and economic alleviation, PRWORA's child support and paternity establishment policies reinforce a gendered distribution of power. In undercutting women's state-supported economic safety net, TANF increases women's dependence on individual men. This pattern substantiates Josephson's (1997) claim that the presumption of a "family wage" underscores contemporary child support policy. Furthermore, TANF policies are economically punitive toward mothers who refuse to provide paternal identifying information. In her qualitative study, Monson (1997) observed child support workers conducting paternity establishment interviews. Workers asked women detailed questions about their sexual activity during the conceptive period that commonly exceeded the minimum legal requirement necessary to start a paternity action. Questions regarding male sexual practice were kept to a minimum. Instead, after paternity adjudication, men were subject to in-depth questioning regarding their economic and employment statuses. On the basis of these observations, Monson argues that paternity establishment procedures uphold traditional gender norms.

In addition, mothers, like fathers, sometimes experienced the state as adversary. In these instances, women opposed intervention to protect both their interest and the interest of their children. Edin (1995) found that women purposefully withheld paternal identifying information for a variety of reasons: They were afforded more money than through formal support mechanisms, they were afraid of fathers due to histories of domestic violence or other types of abuse,[3] they were sensitive to fathers' precarious economic situations, and they believed that direct payments facilitated a positive social relationship between father and child.

Moreover, research offers little evidence that these payments will reduce "welfare dependency" or make a significant contribution to the custodial families' financial security (Danziger and Nichols-Casebolt 1990; Nichols-Casebolt and Klawitter 1990). Child support, which has been central to the agenda of liberal middle-class feminists, does not necessarily advance the claims of women who receive public assistance. Josephson (1997) and Mink (1998) argue that child support policy has proven of much greater benefit to mothers who do not receive welfare as their former partners are more able to pay, they keep all the funds, and they can choose whether to pursue support. Here, state intervention does not assist poor women.

Finally, PRWORA problematically positions the interests of poor women alongside those of dominant groups. Garfinkel, Meyer, and Sandefur (1992) argue that Title IV-D policies effectively redistribute income from minority communities to white taxpayers as IV-D recoups monies for the state. In this sense, child support and paternity establishment policies are inextricably bound to dominant class and race interests. When women request financial assistance, PRWORA's fathering policies pit the immediate interests of low-income women against those of low-income men. Low-income women who pursue paternal child support advance

the interests of dominant race and class constituencies. PRWORA forces poor women to assist in the return of monies to the state and the vertical transfer of capital upward.

In sum, PRWORA's child support and paternity establishment policies articulate fatherhood as male breadwinning. However, these policies do not support men's earning potential but rather promote punitive enforcement practices that partially undermine male privilege. Likewise, these fathering policies hold paradoxical implications for women. They work to maintain a patriarchal economy by undercutting women's economic safety net, thereby increasing their dependence on individual men. Nevertheless, they offer women some degree of economic and legal protection.

SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF PATERNAL IDENTITY

PRWORA does not solely equate fatherhood with male breadwinning. Through social service programs, PRWORA's revisions construct a subjective paternal ideal and circulate the discourse of "responsible fatherhood" among low-income men and men of color. Scholars of the welfare state have acknowledged the ways in which state-funded social service programs seek to reshape individual identities (Fraser 1990; Solinger 1992). In her study of maternity homes in the 1950s, Ricki Solinger (1992, 105) notes how social welfare rhetoric understood the "self" as "a new protean entity, which, properly conditioned, could be reshaped to override the biological, moral or psychological missteps of the prior self." Likewise, contemporary programs construe fathers not only as financial providers but also as affective companions and caregivers. Like PRWORA's fiscal measures, their construction of fatherhood simultaneously upholds and undermines gender hierarchy. These programs may also prove empowering for individual men, yet they do little to challenge structural race and class relations.

Many of the job training programs piloted under PRWORA also offer family counseling, parenting training/education, and peer support. For example, Minnesota's "Dads Make a Difference" is a paternity education project run by the local child support office. Their literature asserts that "involved, nurturing fathers are a key component in raising competent, healthy and responsible children" (Dads make a difference 1998). The "Parent's Fair Share" program in Missouri is also operated by the office of child support and not only helps fathers in employment searches but also "assist(s) noncustodial parents in providing emotional support for their children" (Futures and related programs 1998).

Innumerable such programs now exist nationwide. In general, their literature stresses the necessity of emotive paternal involvement for individual healthy developmental outcomes and large scale reductions in social ills (Blankenhorn 1995; Horn and Bush 1997; Levine and Pitt 1995; Minnesota Fathering Alliance 1992). These programs attempt to mold both the behavior and the inner psychologies of

men by circulating the discourse of "responsible fatherhood" among program participants. The "Parent's Fair Share" demonstration project refers to their "responsible fatherhood" curriculum as a "behavior-change intervention" (Bloom and Sherwood 1994, 93). As program evaluators describe, "a key goal of the curriculum is to help participants 'redefine manhood'" (Bloom and Sherwood 1994, 112). Responsible fatherhood's politically centrist discourse satisfies diverse elements of the political spectrum and constitutes a contemporary version of "hegemonic masculinity." It responds to both calls from the New Right and feminist constituencies for greater paternal responsibility and involvement.[4] Fathering programs commonly propose a politically neutral model of masculinity in which a man postpones fatherhood until he is "prepared emotional[ly] and financially to support his child," establishes paternity in the instance of nonmartial birth, shares the physical and emotional child care with the child's mother, and provides financial support (Levine and Pitt 1995, 5).

Making Dads, Making Gender

Gender is a central and contested category in programmatic literature. The content waffles between a backlash-like response to gender shifts and a sympathetic recognition of gendered hierarchies. For instance, one program's publication states, "empowering women may leave men behind. It is important to recognize men's needs as well" (Levine and Pitt 1995, 165). This standpoint places women's needs in opposition to men's, without examining what other forces may be inhibiting the need satisfaction of any particular group of men. Its reasoning reduces male powerlessness to the axis of gender and ignores other structural impediments such as race and class marginalization. Relatedly, programs associate difficulties in men's responsible fathering "to the fact that most participants lacked positive, male parental role models" (Bloom and Sherwood 1994, 69). A recent conference of social service providers from fathering programs advanced a similar logic. A common pronouncement was "women don't raise men, they raise boys." According to this framework, female-headed households produce a compromised masculinity.

At the same time, this literature challenges some aspects of traditional American gender socialization. One work attributes paternal noninvolvement to "old stereotypes of fathers and the strong socialization patterns associated with these stereotypical images" (Minnesota Fathering Alliance 1992). Many programs also sponsor father-child groups that instruct men not only on issues of play and discipline but also around matters of child care. Moreover, the use of the therapeutic group process—that emphasizes the stereotypically feminine expression of intrapsychic and relational concerns—also disrupts gender norms. Programmatic literature accepts that affective male and female differences are, at least partially, due to socialization. However, it portrays men as universally less able to communicate their feelings. Fatherhood programs assert that men can adopt and benefit from the psychotherapeutic method: "If men don't participate, it may mean they are afraid and need to be related to on a more personal level" (Levine and Pitt 1995, 115).

Insofar as these subjective accounts may accurately describe a common issue for some men, these programs may challenge traditional gender dynamics at an individual level.

However, this literature generally frames gender as an issue of *difference* as opposed to one encompassing both *difference* and *power.* The writings offer no extended discussion of issues that require an analysis of men's power over women, such as domestic violence. This negligence exists even though domestic violence is often referred to in passing as a common event. In addition, when the literature does discuss domestic violence, it is politically neutralized under the label of "anger management" (Bloom and Sherwood 1994; Levine, Murphy, and Wilson 1993; Levine and Pitt 1995; Minnesota Fathering Alliance 1992). This attention may indeed ameliorate women's experience of domestic violence. However, programs do so by rendering domestic violence a degendered category. For instance, program evaluators quote one peer support participant as stating,

> It [peer support] has kept me from going over there and doing it because I know I'm going to be absolutely no help if I go over and kill that bitch. I'll never be able to salvage the rest of my daughter's life. (Bloom and Sherwood 1994, 111)

Here, impulse control becomes the focus for intervention, and gendered power structures remain mostly unchallenged.

The discussion of "maternal resistance" to increased paternal involvement with children also illustrates the disputed manner in which the literature approaches gender. Drawing on both empirical findings and anecdotal evidence from service providers, the literature posits maternal ambivalence toward paternal participation in child rearing as a major barrier to responsible fatherhood. According to the literature, conflictual interpersonal relations between women and men account for this phenomenon (Bloom and Sherwood 1994; Levine, Murphy, and Wilson 1993; Levine and Pitt 1995; Minnesota Fathering Alliance 1992). This explanation offers little recognition of hierarchical relations of gender and the sexual division of labor. Instead, the inevitable trials and tribulations of heterosexual romance take center stage.

> Moreover, as one interviewee pointed out, the roots of this kind of conflict [over child visitation issues] and intense anger many be traced to the noncustodial parent's pain and frustration over a failed relationship, especially if the custodial parent now had a new partner. (Bloom and Sherwood 1994, 68)

The literature frequently offers the individualized counseling process or "mediation" as the preferred solution to such conflicts.

Relatedly, the tendency to depoliticize heterosexual relations is also present in the literature's advocacy of "father-only" parenting groups. Again, it presents men's and women's needs as oppositional without a full account of why this may be so. The writings describe a male-only environment as the preferred milieu in which

to develop responsible fathering. One manual quotes a male participant in a co-ed parenting training session as saying, "I always felt like I'd be attacked if I disagreed with the women" (Minnesota Fathering Alliance 1992, 62). Although these methods can be helpful to individuals and do not inevitably preclude a political analysis, when employed as the sole means of intervention, they may serve to reproduce traditional gender norms and power structures.

At the same time, however, the fathering literature also offers a subtle analysis of the gendered power dynamics and the sexual division of labor that underlie and (re)produce these psychosocial phenomena. Levine, Murphy, and Wilson's (1993, 28) guide for involving men in early childhood programs acknowledges that an individual woman's experience of oppression contributes to maternal resistance: "Many women have had bad experiences with their own fathers, husbands, brothers, or other men in their lives. They may have been abused, and fear that their children will be abused." Relatedly, this writing implicitly critiques the sexual division of labor insofar as it understands the home to be the traditional site of power and identity for women. Citing an empirical study, one guide reads, "The home has been women's domain and many women are reluctant to relinquish or share control over the only domain in which they have power" (Minnesota Fathering Alliance 1992, 15).

Finally, these programs may work to fulfill the felt desire of many women for financially and emotionally participatory partners. In Josephson's (1997, 120) focus groups with women serviced by the IV-D program, "custodial mothers were asked to state one thing that would make their lives better. One women immediately replied, 'Responsible men.' The other women concurred." In sum, these programs may work to destabilize gender hierarchy while concomitantly reifying it.

Reproducing Race and Class

Fathering programs can be understood as individually empowering for the low-income men and men of color who participate in them. However, they do little to undermine structural race and class privilege. The programs' interpersonal milieu may be psychologically beneficial for individual men. A common intervention is mentorship where program staff and/or men from the community form a mentor-like relationship with participants. Significant affective bonds between staff and participants frequently develop: "Some participants said they had not had contact with someone who cared so much about them for many years" (Bloom and Sherwood 1994, 108). Likewise, these programs also offer and facilitate a strong peer network. An initial evaluation of the multisite "Parent's Fair Share" demonstration project reports, "Almost all of the interviewees described the powerful effect of meeting others who were experiencing similar problems to the other members. . . . Many used the words such as 'close-knit' and 'family' to describe the bonds that formed among group members" (Bloom and Sherwood 1994, 106). Thus, fathering programs can be psychologically empowering for men and can facilitate individual change.

Yet, these interventions do not address the sociostructural factors that contribute to the situation of the men and their families. As one program director states, "we are trying to get them out of the lifestyle they are in—selling drugs and gang involvement" (Levine and Pitt 1995, 130). This logic understands poverty's consequences as lifestyle choices and does not acknowledge the rigidity of the social and economic barriers that the men face. The "Parent's Fair Share" evaluation recognizes the centrality of these factors.

> In the final analysis, peer support cannot "solve" many of the problems participants experience. The program may persuade a participant to face up to a legal problem, but he may have no access to an attorney. Another may agree to address his drug problem, but there may be no slots available in residential treatment programs in the community. (Bloom and Sherwood 1994, 117)

Likewise, these programs cannot solve the economic problems that contribute to familial strains. The programs' individualized discourse does not challenge class-related inequalities. Rather, as individual relations come to the fore, a potential discussion of economic and social restructuring is lost.

Race is also a focal category in this literature. As many of these programs primarily serve communities of color, they often incorporate elements of multicultural discourse and culturally sensitive practice that is currently popular within the social services. Some use Afrocentric curriculum and most discuss the centrality of racism in the lives of men that may serve to instill a sense of ethnic pride and solidarity (Levine and Pitt 1995; Minnesota Fathering Alliance 1992). In one program, men participate in the African ceremony of "crossing the broom"—symbolizing the passage from boyhood into manhood—at the end of their initiation period: "After crossing the broom, the staff and past class graduates welcome them into the community of responsible fatherhood" (Levine and Pitt 1995, 131). At the same time that programs may instill a sense of positive ethnic identification, their rhetoric of individual responsibility may also serve to weaken collective opposition to racial oppression. This perspective follows Fraser's (1995) discussion of the political limitations of liberal multiculturalism. According to the "Parent's Fair Share" evaluation,

> One of the facilitators said that, for African-American participants, one sign of change comes when a participant begins to realize that "you can't blame whites for your mishaps in life. You have to put your feelings aside and do what's best for the child." (Bloom and Sherwood 1994, 112)

Here, notions of racial pride come up against notions of racial justice.

Griswald (1993) claims that the modern state has freed men to develop more affective ties to women and children. This investigation of PRWORA's fathering programs shows that the state creates these bonds by circulating a particular fathering discourse among low-income men and men of color. Fathering programs are sites of highly contested power relations, serving both to reproduce and undermine

gender hierarchy. Moreover, the programs' deployment of psychological and multicultural discourses may empower poor men and men of color on an individual level, but they do little to challenge structural race and class inequalities in the larger society.

CONCLUSION

This discussion of PRWORA's child support and paternity establishment provisions has argued that the state actively constructs the category of fatherhood. This is accomplished by both regulating paternal financial contributions and by intervening in paternal identity formation. Moreover, the state's articulation of fatherhood has done little to privilege men in marginal class and race positions. Connell (1995, 7) contends that the "sciences of masculinity may be emancipatory or they may be controlling. They may even be both at once." The same may be said of the state's construction of fatherhood. PRWORA's policies simultaneously reify the relations of gender domination and offer some space to contest them. However, there is nothing obvious about this liberatory potential. Hidden behind the politically neutralized discourse of responsible fatherhood is a complex web of class, race, and gender interests. It is incumbent on those seeking social change to challenge the dominant interests driving PRWORA's construction of fatherhood. This must be done in coalition with the men and women directly affected by these policies. Fathering programs provide one potential site for such organizing to take place.

NOTES

1. From July through September 1997, adult whites comprised 36 percent of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) caseload, adult African Americans comprised 35.4 percent, and adult Latinas comprised 21.2 percent. Given that African American and Latinos respectively account for 13 percent and 11 percent of the total U.S. population, they are significantly overrepresented on the TANF caseload (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1998).

2. TANF work requirements also posit maternal employment as a substitute for public aid. Although this article cannot take up this extensive discussion, many argue that this is not a realistic possibility given women's marginal status in the labor market, the lack of both job security and benefits characteristic of low-skill/wage jobs, and the absence of accessible day care (Abramovitz 1996; Edin and Lein 1997).

3. Under prior Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) regulations, domestic violence exemptions were difficult to obtain. Under TANF, states, if they so choose, have the opportunity to create attainable standards of proof, a more effective and sensitive implementation process, and the ability to link women with services (Roberts 1997). Thus, TANF revisions are increasingly sensitive to victims' needs.

4. This is not to imply that there is little significant difference between New Right and progressive fathering paradigms. For a discussion of New Right conceptualizations, see Blankenhorn (1995) and Horn and Bush (1997). For an investigation of the feminist perspective, see Ehrenreich (1983) and Lupton and Barclay (1997).

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